

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MBABAN 00974 01 OF 02 231506Z
ACTION IO-14

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
FRB-03 INR-10 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02
OPIC-03 SP-02 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 SS-15 OIC-02 ARA-10 EA-10
EUR-12 NEA-10 CEA-01 STR-07 AGRE-00 /152 W
-----103543 231710Z /45 40

R 230600Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY MBABANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4260
INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY MASERU
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 MBABANE 0974

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB WZ
SUBJECT: ILO/ECA CONFERENCE ON LABOR MIGRATION POLICY FOR
SOUTHERN AFRICA, LUSAKA, APRIL 4-8, 1978

1. EMBASSY HAS LEARNED UNOFFICIALLY CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN LUSAKA
APRIL 4-8 ON FORMATION OF A COMMON LABOR MIGRATION POLICY
BY COUNTRIES SUPPLYING SOUTH AFRICA WITH MIGRANT LABORERS.
THE CONFERENCE WILL BE SPONSORED BY THE ILO, THE ECONOMIC
COMMISSION FOR AFRICA (ECA) AND THE MULTI-NATIONAL PROGRAM-
MING AND OPERATIONS CENTER FOR EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA.
REPRESENTATIVES INVITED FROM BOTSWANA, LESOTHO, MALAWI, MOZAMBIQUE,
SWAZILAND, THE ANC OFFICE IN ZAMBIA, POSSIBLY SWAPO FOR
NAMIBIA AND LIBERATION MOVEMENT REPRESENTATIVES FROM
ZIMBABWE. OTHER NON-SUPPLIER STATES WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE
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PAGE 02 MBABAN 00974 01 OF 02 231506Z

ECA WILL ALSO SEND DELEGATES.

2. SWAZILAND WILL BE REPRESENTED BY RALPH BHEMBE,
COMMISSIONER OF LABOR; FION DE VLETTER, CHAIRMAN OF THE
ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA AND
SWAZILAND; AND TENNYSON NKONYONE, MANPOWER PLANNING OFFICE.

3. THE CONFERENCE PLANS ARE TO PREPARE POLICY GUIDE-LINES FOR MINISTERS OF LABOR IN THE COUNTRIES SUPPLYING SOUTH AFRICA WITH MIGRANT LABORERS. THERE WAS REPORTEDLY A PREPARATORY MEETING IN LUSAKA IN EARLY FEBRUARY TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE CONFERENCE AND TO DECIDE WHICH OF THE AVAILABLE PAPERS WOULD BE PRESENTED. A FAIR NUMBER OF BACKGROUND STUDIES, MOSTLY SPONSORED BY THE ILO FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN CHAMBER OF MINES, HAVE BEEN DONE IN THE PAST FEW YEARS. THE ILO-SPONSORED PAPERS WERE DONE SPECIFICALLY IN PREPARATION FOR THIS POLICY PLANNING ATTEMPT. THE REPORTS WERE DONE ON A COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY BASIS AND ATTEMPTED TO IDENTIFY THE PARTICULAR CHARACTERISTICS AND PROBLEMS OF EACH COUNTRY'S MIGRANT LABOR FLOW. UP UNTIL THESE STUDIES, VIRTUALLY NOTHING HAD BEEN WRITTEN ON MIGRANT LABOR FROM SWAZILAND.

4. GOS DOES NOT HAVE AN OFFICIAL POLICY ON MIGRANT LABOR. (FOR THAT MATTER, THE GOS DOESN'T HAVE ANY LABOR POLICY AT ALL BEYOND SUPPRESSION OF UNIONS.) ALTHOUGH THE KING HAS PUBLICLY QUESTIONED THE NEED AND REASONS FOR SWAZIS GOING TO RSA MINES, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE MINES PROVIDE A BADLY NEEDED "SAFETY VALVE" TO ABSORB SURPLUS SWAZI LABOR. IT IS HIGHLY LIKELY THAT THE "SAFETY VALVE" WILL BECOME EVEN MORE IMPORTANT IN THE FUTURE DUE TO SWAZILANDS HIGH BIRTH-RATE, AND FAILURE TO PROVIDE ANYWHERE NEAR ENOUGH MODERN SECTOR JOBS INSIDE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MBABAN 00974 01 OF 02 231506Z

SWAZILAND. FYI IF THE SWAZILAND ECONOMY CONTINUES TO GROW AT ITS PRESENT RATE, (A VERY UNLIKELY PROSPECT) IT SHOULD CREATE 3-4,000 NEW JOBS PER YEAR. A CONSERVATIVE ESTIMATE WOULD PLACE 7,000 NEW JOB SEEKERS INTO THE ECONOMY EACH YEAR. END FYI.

5. HOWEVER, THE "SAFETY VALUE" SYSTEM MAY BE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE SAG IS DETERMINED TO REDUCE ITS DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN MINERS THROUGH INCREASED MECHANIZATION, GREATER RECRUITMENT IN THE HOMELANDS AND URBAN AREAS, AND THE CREATION OF A STABLE BLACK WORK FORCE RATHER THAN RELYING ON A MIGRANT LABOR FORCE. FYI IN 1977 DESPITE RECORD NUMBER OS APPLICANTS, SWAZI MIGRANT MINE WORKERS DROPPED FROM THEIR ALL TIME HIGH IN 1976 OF 23,000 DOWN TO ABOUT 17,000. A FURTHER DECREASE IS EXPECTED IN 1979. END FYI.

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PAGE 01 MBABAN 00974 02 OF 02 231619Z
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 MBABANE 0974

6. NOT SURPRISINGLY, GOS WILL PRESENT A CONSERVATIVE POSITION AT THE CONFERENCE. SWAZILAND DELEGATES WILL OFFER A "DEFENSIVE" POLICY FOR COUNTRIES SUPPLYING MIGRANT LABORERS. THIS POLICY WOULD ENTAIL A PROLONGED GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL, THUS HOPEFULLY ALLOWING SUPPLIER STATES TO PLAN INTERNAL ADJUSTMENT RESULTING FROM RETURN OF WORKERS AND FROM STATES' REDUCED ABILITY TO EXPORT UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS. THE NUMBER OF MIGRANT WORKERS TO BE SUPPLIED BY EACH COUNTRY DURING THE WITHDRAWAL PERIOD WOULD BE NEGOTIATED TAKING INTO ACCOUNT EACH COUNTRY'S ABILITY TO ABSORB ADDITIONAL LABOR.

7. COMMENT: OBVIOUSLY THIS PROPOSAL WOULD REQUIRE A LARGE AMOUNT OF COOPERATION AMONG SUPPLIER STATES TO PREVENT ONE OR MORE FROM ALLOWING ITS SURPLUS LABOR TO GO INTO SOUTH AFRICA.
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PAGE 02 MBABAN 00974 02 OF 02 231619Z

SOME TYPE OF CARTEL ARRANGEMENT AND MONITORING SYSTEM WOULD HAVE TO BE DEvised. THEORETICALLY, THIS COULD BE DONE BY AN IMPARTIAL OUTSIDER SUCH AS THE ILO. HOWEVER, GIVEN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALITIES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT SUCH A MECHANISM WOULD WORK,

ESPECIALLY IN PERIODS OF ECONOMIC RECESSION. AS AN EXAMPLE, THE SWAZILAND ECONOMY IS PRESENTLY SO MUCH STRONGER THAN THAT IN OTHER SUPPLIER STATES THAT SWAZILAND WOULD PROBABLY BE THE FIRST TO HAVE SUBSTANTIAL CUTBACKS IMPOSED. SUCH AN ACTION WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO GOS. AS SHOWN BY THE RECENT DISTURBANCES IN LESOTHO THAT OCCURRED WHEN SOME MINE RECRUITING OFFICES WERE TO BE CLOSED, THERE IS A DEFINITE POSSIBILITY OF A BACKLASH IF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS SEEN AS CUTTING OFF ALL-TOO-SCARCE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES. IN REALITY THE INITIATIVE, TEMPO AND ALLOTMENT OF MIGRANT LABOR FORCE REDUCTIONS WILL REMAIN IN THE HANDS OF THE SAG (BARRING, OF COURSE, SOME DRAMATIC DECISION BY A SUPPLIER COUNTRY TO SUDDENLY STOP MIGRANT LABOR FLOWS). THE PROPOSED CARTEL'S REAL IMPACT WOULD BE IN BARGAINING FOR IMPROVED WORKING CONDITIONS FOR MIGRANT LABORERS REMAINING ON SOUTH AFRICAN MINES. END COMMENT.

8. THE FINAL PART OF SWAZILAND'S PROPOSAL WILL BE FOR COMMODITY SUPPLY AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE SUPPLIER STATES AND THE MINING INDUSTRY. THE SUPPLIER STATES COULD PROVIDE SUCH ITEMS AS FOODSTUFFS, TIMBER, CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR, AND MANUFACTURED GOODS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE A HIGH DEGREE OF SPECIALIZATION (:3.G., CONCRETE PROPS, PACKAGING MATERIAL) TO THE MINING INDUSTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA. NORLAND

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